

# The educational limits of ethical cosmopolitanism

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**THE EDUCATIONAL LIMITS OF ETHICAL  
COSMOPOLITANISM:  
TOWARD THE IMPORTANCE OF VIRTUE IN  
COSMOPOLITAN EDUCATION AND COMMUNITIES**

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# **THE EDUCATIONAL LIMITS OF ETHICAL COSMOPOLITANISM: TOWARD THE IMPORTANCE OF VIRTUE IN COSMOPOLITAN EDUCATION AND COMMUNITIES**

## **Abstract**

Cosmopolitanism has become an influential theory in both political and, increasingly, educational discourse. In simple terms cosmopolitanism can be understood as a response to the globalised and diverse world in which we live. Diverse in nature, cosmopolitan ideas come in many forms. The focus here is on what have been termed “strong” ethical forms of cosmopolitanism; that is, positions which conceptualise moral bonds and obligations as resulting from a shared, common humanity. The view that pupils should be taught that all human beings are equal and, crucially, that this entails a responsibility to take action when human equity is challenged or transgressed, is finding increasing expression within educational literature. The suggestion explored here is that strong forms of ethical cosmopolitanism are limited ways which seriously limits their educational worth. In the final section, it is argued that forms of cultural and political cosmopolitanism (which are part of the lived experiences of intra- and supra-national citizenship) are best responded to by developing the requisite virtues in pupils to engage with diverse and dialogic communities.

## **Key Words**

Cosmopolitanism, cosmopolitan education, citizenship, virtue

## **Introduction**

In recent years a significant body of literature in the fields of political science (for example, Appiah, 2006; Held, 2005; 2010; Nussbaum, 1994, 1996) and a growing corpus in the field of education (for example, Merry and de Ruyter, 2011; Osler and Starkey, 2003) has identified “cosmopolitanism” as a meaningful and useful concept for understanding contemporary citizenship. A core tenet of cosmopolitan theories is an acceptance of the “fact” of globalisation and a desire to understand and define citizenship identities as transcending rootedness in the nation-state. According to one of cosmopolitanism’s leading proponents,

the boundaries between traditional nation-states have broken down to the extent that states, and their citizens, are inherently interconnected in ‘overlapping communities of fate’ (Held, 2005: 1). As such there is an increasing need for, and a persuasiveness of, a cosmopolitan world outlook. Cosmopolitanism itself is a diffuse concept, which permits a range of interpretations based on particular political, cultural and – of specific interest here – ethical claims. “Ethical cosmopolitanism” can be understood in terms of theories which include ‘the acknowledgement of some notion of common humanity that translates ethically into an idea of *shared or common moral duties* toward others by virtue of this humanity’ (Lu, 2000: 245; emphasis added). Such a position is exemplified in Held’s (2010: 69) assertion that ‘[H]umankind belongs to a single ‘moral realm’ in which each person is regarded as equally worthy of respect and consideration’. That this cosmopolitanism principle provides a meaningful ethic which can guide and shape educational practice has received increasing levels of attention in educational discourse.

The aim here is to critique the work of those theorists whom seek to assert what have been termed “strong” forms of ethical cosmopolitanism as appropriate to the moral aims and goals of education. First, the nature of the “strong” cosmopolitan ethic and its relationship to education will be considered. Following this, a number of criticisms will be advanced which, it is argued, render this cosmopolitan ethic educationally problematic. In the third and final section, it will be suggested that education does need to respond to, and support pupils for, their cultural and political cosmopolitan experiences, but that an apt normative ethical theory of the moral obligations of citizenship is better provided by a virtue-based perspective than by deontological, duty-based forms of ethical cosmopolitanism. This virtue-based approach conceives the moral obligations between citizens as inherently connected to intra- and supra-national *political* communities. In the contemporary world, a particular feature of such communities – which are complex and challenging – is undeniably their culturally cosmopolitan nature. Some implications for cosmopolitan education are then considered.

### **Cosmopolitanism and Cosmopolitan Education**

As indicated in the introduction, cosmopolitanism is a diverse field and as such it is important that the concept is not viewed in homogenous terms. In its simplest formulation,

cosmopolitan derives from the empirical assertion that the processes of globalisation have resulted in social and political networks which render the traditional locus of citizenship affiliations and membership less relevant (though not necessarily obsolete). Cosmopolitanism has been offered (in some formulations simultaneously) as a political, cultural, economic, and ethical theory. In order to clarify the focus here on specifically ethical versions of cosmopolitanism, it is useful to draw on the distinction between “weak” and “strong” forms of the cosmopolitan ethical (Miller, 2002a). In its “weak” formulation, cosmopolitanism is founded on the ethical claim that all human beings are of equal worth (and dignity). This claim is limited in the sense that it does not seek to identify any resulting moral responsibilities for action upon the individual. Morally speaking, that is, it does not in and of itself require citizens to help others who have their equal humanity challenged or transgressed wherever in the world they may be. In contrast, for “strong” cosmopolitans, the recognition of common human dignity carries with it important further normative obligations between individuals qua human beings. At the heart of strong forms of ethical cosmopolitanism is the moral claim that our allegiances and obligations transcend parochialism and are not bounded by proximity. In concrete terms, this places particular burdens of responsibility on citizens towards others living outside the immediate nation-state. That is, in situations where the equality and dignity of humans is oppressed, individuals, often living distant lives in faraway nations, have a *moral duty* to act in support of those suffering such oppression by virtue of their common humanity (albeit within some certain levels of constraint). According to Held (2010: 70-71) citizens:

... have to be aware of, and accountable for, the consequences of actions, direct or indirect, intended or unintended, which may radically restrict or delimit the choices of others. Individuals have both personal-responsibility-rights as well as personal-responsibility-obligations.

Such responsibilities are not constrained by local or national boundaries. From this strong position, those boundaries which seek to limit our moral obligations to those within a given confine (such as the political community of a given nation-state) are seen to be arbitrary in moral terms (Nussbaum, 1994, 1996; see also Appiah, 2006). It is for this reason that the strong cosmopolitan position is frequently contrasted with communitarian positions which limit or prioritise the existence of stronger moral obligations to those within the same national communities. In asserting this ethical claim, strong cosmopolitans are invoking a particular

moral idea which draws on the Cynic Diogenes' assertion, when asked from where he came, that 'I am a citizen of the world [*kosmopolitês*]'. More significantly, strong ethical cosmopolitanism also draws on the moral universalism of Immanuel Kant's principle of citizens as "ends in themselves". From this Kantian, deontological perspective, action is morally right when it is in accordance with duty. As such, the sort of strong ethical cosmopolitanism with which I am interested in here advances a form of moral universalism based on a particular formulation of a deontological rule – namely, that moral duties follow from the recognition of a common human worth that is common to all humans irrespective of their geographical and physical location. It is this specific and significant cosmopolitan dimension which has gained increasing attention within educational discourse and which is of particular interest here. According to one of the leading proponents of strong ethical cosmopolitanism, Martha Nussbaum (1996: 7), we are morally compelled to ensure that through our actions we do nothing that 'we know to be immoral from the perspective of Kant's community of all humanity'. This requires citizens living in one particular nation-state community to consider and account for the needs of others in the world. For Nussbaum, there is a need to "work to make all human beings part of our community of dialogue and concern" (Ibid, 9). Moreover, and with regard to education, Nussbaum contends that 'world citizenship, rather than democratic or national citizenship, [should be] the focus for civic education' (ibid, 11).

The strong ethical cosmopolitanism found within contemporary political science has found recent expression in educational discourse. At times, this is implicit. According to two of the leading educational proponents of the cosmopolitan ethic, a defining characteristic of the educated cosmopolitan citizen is to 'work to achieve peace, human rights and democracy within the local community and at a global level, by... *accepting personal responsibility* and recognising the importance of civic commitment' (Osler and Starkey, 2003: 246; emphasis added). In exploring the relationship between cosmopolitanism and civic education, the political scientist Jeremy Waldron (2003: 23) suggests that:

The moral concern we should be teaching our children is equal concern for all humans in the world; and the identity we should encourage young people to recognize is an identity that involves "recognizing humanity in the stranger and the other" and responding humanely to the human in every cultural form.

Further support for the educational worth of the strong cosmopolitan ethic has recently come from Michael Merry and Doret de Ruyter. Drawing heavily on cosmopolitan normativity they have suggested that ‘moral educators must teach that cosmopolitan morality *obliges* one to do what one is *able* to do’ (Merry and de Ruyter, 2011: 4). A key part of the educational utility of the cosmopolitan ethic is its focus on the question as to *why* we might choose (or be obliged) to act to help challenge and address injustices suffered by others beyond the borders of our own nation-state as sequentially prior to questions regarding *how* such help might materialise. In conceptualising the importance of the cosmopolitan ethic to educational discourse and practice, both Osler and Starkey, and Merry and de Ruyter, present global citizen responsibility as a universal (in the sense of applying to all) principle founded on notions of shared humanity, global solidarity, and human rights.

For some then, the strong cosmopolitan ethic provides an important potential educational response to the difficulties of preparing pupils for the experiences and challenges of living in an increasingly globalised, plural and complex world. There are, however, a number of reasons to question the efficacy of strong cosmopolitanism as a normative theory of moral obligations and, therefore, as a framework for informing education. It is to these tensions that focus now turns.

### **Cosmopolitan Education: Some Criticisms**

There are a number of reasons to doubt the persuasiveness of strong ethical forms of cosmopolitanism with specific regard to education. As the British political philosopher and critic of cosmopolitanism David Miller (2002a: 81) reminds us, the core cosmopolitan claim of the equal moral worth of human beings is simply ‘platitudinous’ for the reason that very few would disagree with the principles of human equity and dignity. When strong cosmopolitans employ this core claim as a base from which to talk of moral obligation (and therefore an expectation for action) across humanity, cosmopolitanism becomes problematic – especially from an educational standpoint.

A central criticism of cosmopolitanism as a political and ethical theory is the realist contention that its ideals are simply that – utopian principles which bear little relation to actual lives and experiences of individuals in the contemporary world. Put simply, it expects too much and does so in not unambiguous terms. A strong cosmopolitan ethic tells us little of value regarding the inter-connection between (i) these utopian ideals, (ii) the strength of the moral compulsion acting upon individuals and (iii) the practical actions which an individual may take in order to fulfil the moral obligations which cosmopolitanism apparently requires of them. Lu (2000: 250) expresses this point clearly in her commentary on critics of cosmopolitanism: ‘ironically, perhaps precisely because of its worldly aspirations, it [cosmopolitanism] has virtually no real world application’. Even its proponents are aware of the utopianism which lies at the heart of the cosmopolitan ethic: ‘[M]oral education informed by cosmopolitanism is not for the faint heart. Its demands will seem unrelenting. To help prevent moral educators and their pupils from feeling overwhelmed, they will need to acknowledge that moral cosmopolitanism is an *ideal*’ (Merry and de Ruyter, 2011: 3). In recognising this idealism, Merry and de Ruyter make use of the strong cosmopolitan ethic to identify an important role for education in helping pupils to understand their moral obligations as cosmopolitan citizens. Thus, whilst ‘...in the absence of important background conditions ‘justice for all’ demands too much of us, but this does not absolve us from certain moral obligations’ (Merry and de Ruyter, 2011: 2). What is not clear is precisely what such ‘certain moral obligations’ might be when applied to either political or educational practice. For its supporters, strong ethical cosmopolitanism may well have real world application, but as they present the theory it lacks any real substantive detail capable of usefully guide, inform and shape the actions of citizens, a point returned to in more detail later in this section.

It is also possible to conceive that to teach pupils that they are morally obliged to uphold and further justice in a this strong ethical cosmopolitan sense neglects and undermines the moral significance of democratic forms of citizen engagement within nation-states. As the influential American political scientist Amy Gutmann makes clear (1994):

Our obligations as democratic citizens go beyond our duties as politically-unorganized individuals because our capacity to act effectively to further justice increases when we are empowered as citizens, and so therefore does our responsibility to act to further justice. Democratic citizens have institutional means at their disposal that solitary individuals, or "citizens of



the world" only, do not. Some of those institutional means are international in scope, but even those (the United Nations being the most prominent example) tend to depend on the cooperation of sovereign societies for effective action.

It is simply an empirical fact that the vast majority of the processes, systems and mechanisms for furthering justice democratically that are available to citizens are fundamentally rooted within sovereign democratic nation-states. It is through engagement in democratic communities (which may of course involve matters of global concern) that citizens' gain motivation to further participate and act, although this may include working toward the realization of universal political ideals (cf. Laborde, 2002).

An additional concern with attempts to invoke a strong cosmopolitan ethic in educational contexts is its reliance on an overly abstract and impartial rationalism. Writing in the 1930s, the German critic Max Boehm refers to cosmopolitanism as 'a mental attitude prompting the individual to substitute for his attachments to his more immediate homeland an analogous relationship toward the whole world, which he comes to regard as a greater and higher fatherland' (1932: 458). In its strongest form ethical cosmopolitanism appears to require individuals, in a moral sense, to detach themselves from their particularistic and parochial loyalties and sentiments. Expressed in simple terms, this requires citizens to make a rational choice to over-ride or ignore basic affective attachments. In this sense the strong cosmopolitan requirement is coercive. To ask citizens to downplay or ignore the primacy of communal bonds and obligations also begs the following question: if all human beings are equal why should I seek to protect a particular person (which may be my child, sibling, friend or fellow citizen) from harm and injustice in favour of any other person (which may be a stranger living a great distance away)? For those who doubt the persuasiveness of the cosmopolitan ethic, this excessive rationalism is not only detrimental to more local (including national) communal bonds but is also psychologically difficult (if not impossible) to achieve. Paraphrasing Nussbaum, Barber (1994) suggests that:

No one actually lives "in the world of which the cosmopolitan wishes us to be good citizens". Rather, we live in this particular neighborhood of the world, that block, this valley, that seashore, this family. Our attachments start parochially and only then grow outwards. To bypass them in favour of an immediate cosmopolitanism is to risk ending up nowhere – feeling

neither at home nor in the world.

If we take the cosmopolitan ethic seriously as an educational framework, there is a distinct danger that it might result in the abstraction of pupils from their particularistic histories and emotional ties which give meaning to bonds with family, friends and fellow (in the sense of local and national) citizens. As Marx (1994) reflects 'to disregard the role in human experience of the contingent and the irrational, unfortunate as that role may be, is to risk adopting merely visionary, hence infeasible, programs of action'. It would appear, then, that one reason why strong cosmopolitanism falls down as a basis for educational practice is precisely because the sense of trust, solidarity, and mutuality through which humans, at least in part, are constituted is simply not available on a supra-national or global level.

It is important, educationally speaking, to remember that the local and national attachments at the heart of us are concerned with the affective as they are with the cognitive. Bryan Turner (2002: 49) talks of the importance of 'emotional specificity' when he argues that the 'geography of emotions... appears to be important in creating civic loyalties and commitments. Memories need a location where... common rituals can be enacted'. For Turner (2002: 49) it 'would therefore be difficult to grasp how individuals might feel some passionate loyalties to global government or indeed to any global identities'. This does not necessarily mean that such emotional attachment is *impossible* at the global / world level, but rather (i) that the bonds of emotional specificity become stretched as we move outwards from the familial to the global and (ii) that connections at a global level are in important ways dependent on, and build from, the relationships and bonds which citizens enjoy with their more immediate fellows. For this reason it may well be useful to consider cosmopolitan attachments as the outer sphere of a set of concentric circles emanating out from the individual (and including the family, the local community, and the national political community). Crucially, however, it is difficult to conceive that the bonds, and therefore obligations, do not become more complex, diffuse, and therefore weaker, as we move outwards from our immediate familial relationships. The result is a serious undermining of the educational legitimacy of inculcating in pupils the belief that the 'scope of moral responsibility is in principle universal' (Merry and de Ruyter, 2011: 2).

That there are tensions in this standpoint is accepted by a number of cosmopolitans, who typically offer two main responses. The first response is to concede that individuals owe greater moral obligation to those with whom they share the closest bonds (family, friends, local/national communities), whilst reinforcing the cosmopolitan ethic alongside (but not necessarily equal to) these commitments. Kwame Anthony Appiah (2006), for example, accepts that '[W]hatever my basic obligations are to the poor far away, they cannot be enough, I believe, to trump, my concerns for my family, my friends, my country; nor can the argument that every life matters require me to be indifferent to the fact that one of those lives is mine'. Nevertheless, we are told that citizens – as individuals and through membership of a particular nation-state – have an obligation to 'do our fair share' to help protect the basic needs of others in the world. Appiah's position resonates in the educational cosmopolitanism of Merry and de Ruyter (2011: 2; emphasis added), who have suggested that '[A]t a minimum the struggle against injustice entails that one reduce the suffering of others, *as far as one is able*, irrespective of pre-existing desires or relationships, but also geographical proximity, of those in need of help'. In these cosmopolitan positions the use of terminology is inherently problematic. Neither 'do our fair share' nor 'as far as one is able' are particularly helpful in guiding educators and pupils regarding the extent of responsibility, the level of moral compulsion operating upon them, or the sorts of actions which one might be expected to take.

To illustrate, consider the following scenario. A man living in the south of England, and whom has been unemployed for an extended period, is struggling to provide his family with food and shelter. The man wins £100 through a lottery competition. Now, given that most strong cosmopolitans are happy to concede that we owe an especial responsibility to our family, we would probably agree that the man does not do anything morally wrong when he uses the money to buy food for his family. Now let us imagine that the man winning the £100 is already extremely wealthy – a multimillionaire in fact. In such a situation it would still be quite difficult to present a compelling argument that the wealthy man is *morally wrong* (as opposed to being dislikeable or selfish) for deciding to use the money to treat his family, rather than donating it to an aid organisation to relieve the suffering of others in another country (see Unger, 1996 for an example of such an argument). The moral situation becomes even more complex if we reconstitute the man as neither poor nor rich, but merely financially comfortable. In the first and third of these situations the cosmopolitan ethic is of little use in

terms of guiding action or assessing the moral actions of those involved. Even in the third situation, that of the millionaire, it would still be extremely difficult (i) to justify his responsibility to allocate his additional resource (the £100) to help strangers overseas rather than his family or (i) to quantify whether, if he had chosen to donate the money to an aid organisation, this would equate to “doing his fair share” (we might, for example, suggest that he should have donated more than the £100). Despite the attempt by some supporters to allow for greater bonds of loyalty to those closest to us, strong ethical cosmopolitanism remains too vague to offer any substantive guide to citizen action and, for this reason, educational practice.

The second response to the tension within strong cosmopolitanism around equal loyalties to all citizens in the world, which is found commonly in educational discourse, is to depict the lived experience of cosmopolitanism as predominantly *localised* in nature. This stance is taken by Audrey Osler (2008: 22) when, for example, she argues that:

[E]ducation for cosmopolitan citizenship... requires us to re-imagine the nation.. as cosmopolitan and to recognise local communities and the national community as cosmopolitan. It implies a sense of solidarity with strangers in distant places but it also requires solidarity, a sense of shared humanity and dialogue with those in the local community and the national community whose perspectives may be very different from our own.

It is difficult to refute that cosmopolitanism (in the sense of the increasingly heterogeneous nature of cultures within Western political communities) is not part of most (if not all) citizen’s lived experience today. Indeed, preparation for this is something which I suggest later should form part of pupils’ education. So too is it hard to counter any suggestion that there are significant political, social and moral reasons that cultural diversity within political communities be both recognised and open to deliberative democratic practices. The central point being expressed here is a suggestion that citizens meet their cosmopolitan obligations (at least in part) through the actions and discourse which they engage in within localised contexts; that is, within their cosmopolitan communities. In and of itself such a stance is not, educationally speaking, problematic. It becomes so, however, when it is aligned with the strong cosmopolitan ethic. Such a stance is at least implicit when Osler and Starkey, for whom the interconnection between the global and the local is fundamental, contend that

whilst cosmopolitan citizenship ‘implies recognition of *our common humanity* and a sense of solidarity with others’, this is contingent on establishing the same bond with ‘others in our own communities, especially those whom we perceive to be different from ourselves’ (2003: 252; emphasis added). Moreover, such an alignment raises a pertinent issue for educators in relation to the *source* of the moral responsibility which citizens have both to fellow citizens and the state. That is, whether moral responsibility to others within our localised communities derives from a shared humanity or from communal bonds based a common history, common concerns and shared values *within that local community*. Whilst the former transcends the nation-state, the latter is often fundamentally rooted within it and derives its source from elsewhere than the notion of common human equality.

To summarise, and according to David Miller (2002a: 81), ‘[T]here is a gap between our moral assessments of states of affairs and the reasons we have for acting in relation to those states of affairs’. The gap to which Miller draws our attention is important and is of particular educational significance. As stated previously, few would dispute the basic principle of human equity nor the need to take seriously certain forms of cosmopolitanism as a feature of our lives today. However, because strong forms of ethical cosmopolitanism seek to invoke normative moral obligations which do not have sufficient justification, and because they leave ambiguous any specific action-guiding principles, they ultimately fail as a significant basis for educational curricula and practice. For these reasons, to utilise the strong cosmopolitan ethic as a basis for education is at best unwarranted and at worst coercive.

### **The importance of virtue in cosmopolitan education and communities**

I have argued in the previous section that there are serious reasons to doubt the educational efficacy of ethical formulations of cosmopolitanism that seek to impose on individual citizens a compelling personal responsibility derived from universal principles of human equity and rights. I have also suggested, nevertheless, that very few educationalists would reject the principle of cosmopolitanism in its entirety. The processes of globalisation, coupled with greater ease of economic and political citizen mobility between nation-states, has undoubtedly led to an increase in lived cosmopolitan experiences – if we understand by that the principle that most citizens living in a Western nation-state encounter a range of political

and cultural influences, representations, ideas and systems in their day to day lives both within and beyond their own nation-states (see Waldron, 2000 for example). To this extent, cultural cosmopolitanism is an empirical fact of life for most citizens in Western societies which adds to and influences, rather than replaces, deeper attachments to local and national communities.

Taking this recognition as a starting point, in what remains of this article, I would like to explore briefly what form a more useful moral response to the cultural cosmopolitanism condition of contemporary citizenship in Western political communities might take. Crucially, I would like to suggest that it is *not* the case that forms of cosmopolitanism which seek to advance a robust ethical standpoint need necessarily adopt a form of moral universalism founded on a deontological, duty-based approach. When faced with both the richness and challenges which cultural cosmopolitanism brings within and beyond the nation-state we should, educationally speaking, look not to deontological forms of strong ethical cosmopolitanism but instead to a virtue-based theory of moral relationships in order to explain the sorts of moral obligations which we have to others. In other words, a virtue ethics perspective might provide a more useful educational framework for considering obligations which citizens have within their cosmopolitan political communities. In this section, therefore, I seek to make a case for a virtue-based approach to cosmopolitan ethics. Because the virtue-based approach is one which (in contrast to the deontological standpoint of the strong cosmopolitan theories considered here) both encourages and guides action some initial requirements for effective engagement within cosmopolitan political communities are suggested and considered. Lastly, and whilst it is recognised that the task is one which is inherently complex, some thoughts are provided regarding the educational task of teaching and learning about and for the importance of virtues in cosmopolitan political communities.

A virtue ethics approach challenges the strong cosmopolitan understanding of supra-national obligations which, owing to its Kantian roots, basis its normative claim on the universal scope of a rule-based ethic – namely that humans act in a morally right way when they take seriously the cosmopolitan claim that, because all humans are of equal worth, we are morally obliged to help others when human dignity is oppressed, irrespective of national communities and borders. Virtue ethicists are less interested in such rule-based principles, and focus

instead on the relationship between moral action and character. It is in the characteristics of conduct, rather than actions in accordance with a governing moral principle, that the content of one's moral character is both formed and expressed. Approaching the moral relationships involved in recognising cultural and political cosmopolitanism in terms of virtues and human character provides a deeper and more rounded understanding of the sorts of actions and conduct which cosmopolitanism entails – something which, as argued previously, is problematic from the dominant duty-based ethical cosmopolitanism. Furthermore, and as is considered in more detail below, a virtue perspective has the possibility to illuminate the sorts of character that pupils (and citizens) might need to engage effectively within the cosmopolitan communities (both within and beyond the nation-state).

Initially, this claim may appear surprising. However, in recent years, there has been a burgeoning of interest in the possible connections between cosmopolitanism and virtues in political science. In his consideration of cosmopolitanism and virtues Bryan Turner (2002: 47) has explored the obligations deriving from, and relating to, human rights. For Turner, these 'human rights obligations' may usefully be framed in terms of 'cosmopolitan virtue'. Central to Turner's thesis is his reconstitution of cosmopolitanism as the expression of certain virtues understood as inherently related to human obligations. Such virtues include 'care for cultures, ironic distance from one's own traditions, concern for the integrity of cultures in a hybrid world, [and] openness to cross-cultural criticism' (Turner, 2002: 60). What Turner has in mind here are particular attitudes of mind which allow citizens to discuss and deliberate the cultural bonds which they derive from communal and national citizenship in cosmopolitan environments. Another notable attempt to present cosmopolitanism in terms of virtues has been provided by Stan Van Hooft. Van Hooft (2007: 308) considers the following statement as indicative of arguments which recognise the increasingly cosmopolitan nature of culture and political participation:

The kind of moral agenda... which I believe to be what many... global citizens would endorse is one in which the core human values of security, justice and democracy are to be achieved not merely through the agency of governments within a society of states but also through global responsibility exercised by individuals to support these goals and through the acceptance of respect for diversity (Dower, 2003: 151).

Pertinently, and missing from the work of proponents of strong ethical cosmopolitanism, Van Hooft asks ‘what virtues are involved in cosmopolitanism conceived of in this way’. Across his analysis, Van Hooft presents a number of “cosmopolitan virtues” which he accords with being a global citizen: “tolerance”, “interest in/empathy for ways of life”, “fallibilism”, “generosity”, “taking responsibility”, “hope”, “courage”, “justice”, and “compassion”. According to this analysis, these general virtues have particular cosmopolitan interpretations. For example, justice as a cosmopolitan virtue is conceived by Van Hooft as the ‘willingness and ability to see the other as as fully human as oneself and as a genuine limit upon one’s own will’ (2007: 313). A key strength of these perceptions is their focus on the sorts of dispositions and attributes central to meaningful recognition of, and action within, cosmopolitan communities. Moreover, whilst linked to principles of humanity, they ask us to focus on moral excellence and human development rather than on simply acting in accordance with a conjectural rule.

In suggesting that a virtue-based response to cosmopolitanism is of value to educational practice, I am less convinced than both Turner and Van Hooft that it makes sense to talk of specifically “cosmopolitan” virtues. Indeed, the demarcation of specific types of virtues is as part of a wider trend within contemporary political science which has resulted in both the proliferation of virtues and the subsequent division of these into certain adjectival categories (see, for example, the work of William Galston, 1995). If virtue is defined in the sense of moral excellence and as referencing a quality of character which is good in and of itself we can see that certain virtues, such as courage and loyalty, are virtues *per se*. Properly constituted and understood, the “cosmopolitan” virtues found within the work of Turner and Van Hooft are, in fact, derivations of core virtues, albeit enacted in the context of lived cosmopolitan experiences. Nevertheless, what both Turner and Van Hooft remind us is that there is value in conceiving the moral relationships between citizens living in different nation-states in terms of the possession of certain attributes, capacities and dispositions – virtues – rather than in an abstract, rule-based formulation. To adopt such a position is to conceive of a fundamental relationship between the moral and the political; that is, that any moral obligations which derive from cosmopolitanism are constituted by obligations to and within political communities. This owes to the fact that political and cultural cosmopolitanism offers ‘important possibilities of self-rule and political influence ‘which lie’ outside the borders of the nation-state’ (Bohman, 2001: 4). For this reason, and as I have



argued elsewhere, citizens have a normative obligation to engage in cosmopolitan political communities which are intra- and supra-national (Peterson, 2011). Crucially, the moral obligation to do so results not from the principle of human equality, but from human excellence; from the need to develop and express virtue that is.

A central feature of the moral obligations which result from supra-national forms of citizenship is that they are not necessarily uniform in nature and scope. As David Miller (2002a: 84) argues ‘what we have now is a patchwork of connections, some economic, some cultural, some political, each giving rise to different kinds of ethical responsibility’. Once this is accepted, the apt educational question concerns the sort of moral development pupils require in order to participate effectively within such a patchwork. The contention offered here is that those citizens who are likely to be most effective in their cosmopolitan experiences are those whom possess (or come to possess) the virtues which enable them to participate in intra- and supra-national political processes and communities. If this claim is accepted, any form of moral and political education aiming to include a cosmopolitan dimension need take account of this focus on character and virtue.

As suggested earlier, the sort of moral response to cosmopolitanism that I am seeking to defend is tentative, and immediately raises certain tensions. As such, there are certain qualifications which are important to recognise. First, and as has been signified above, the view that citizens have moral obligations to supra-national political communities by virtue of their membership and participation within such communities is no argument that the local and national communities found within nation-states are diminished. Owing to bonds of closer cultural and political intimacy and immediacy, there is a good deal of reason to recognise (in both education and within other social institutions) that stronger bonds of moral obligation exist between citizens within local and national political communities than exist beyond the nation-state.

Second, and related to the first, as they are currently constituted and experienced supra-national communities are characterised by fluidity, complexity and dynamism. That this is true is highlighted when we consider supra-national political communities as involving a complex web of formal agreements and treaties alongside organisations and processes operating in the broad field of ‘global civil society’. Such processes do not necessarily result

from top-down governance. As the American political scientist Benjamin Barber (2005: 102) points out, ‘a social foundation of civic institutions and citizenship facilitates the emergence of sovereign governance ...citizens need not await presidents or governments to embrace interdependence and work to construct a civic architecture of global co-operation’. Crucially, just as supranational political communities are fluid, dynamic, and currently being shaped and co-determined by the actual practices of citizenship, so too are the obligations which exist within them. Rather than understanding obligation as given and predetermined, as strong cosmopolitans do, a virtue-based perspective presents the obligations of cosmopolitan citizenship as *at least in part* determined by actors and activities undertaken within globalised political communities. Moreover, there is reason to believe that citizen engagement at a global level is likely to increase participation within the nation-state. It is hard to imagine too many examples of citizen engagement in global affairs (either in relation to governance or what might broadly be termed global civil society) which can occur without recourse or connection to local and national institutions, systems or organisations. In this sense, there is scope for accepting the viewpoint that the practice of citizenship in supra-national contexts enables the citizen to form and express certain attitudes, dispositions and capacities – or virtues – and that this mutually reinforces the practice of citizenship at national and sub-national levels. Furthermore, one need not be able to delineate and detail every possible avenue for supra-national involvement in order to accept this basic proposition.

This does, however, lead to a third immediate tension inherent in the suggestion that a virtue-based approach to the moral nature of cosmopolitan citizenship is of some value; namely, the precise virtues required to engage effectively within cosmopolitan political communities (both intra- and supra-national). In responding to this difficulty it is useful to consider, as suggested previously, that virtues are virtues *per se* – applicable to a variety of circumstances without a need for any adjectival prefix. The virtues of justice, temperance, prudence, courage, compassion and so on appear equally suitable in local, national, and cosmopolitan contexts. In addition, and crucially, the substantive types of virtues and meaning thereof will benefit from delineation and refinement through the sorts of dialogical processes to which both cosmopolitans and their critics are typically committed.

These tensions aside, there are significant educational implications of understanding the moral requirement of cosmopolitan lives in terms of the virtues necessary for political communities rather than in terms of the universalisation of human equity and rights. Before considering these however, it is important to recognise that the translation of a conceptual awareness of, and commitment to, a virtue-based approach to the moral relationships central to cosmopolitanism is unlikely to be unproblematic. As studies have shown, developing education for character in schools can be a complex and contested process (see, for example, Arthur, 2010). The success in operationalising the sort of conceptual approach to cosmopolitanism that I have outlined here will be necessarily affected by the perceptions, understandings and confidence of schools and teachers, as well as the relationships which schools forge with other social groups influencing the development of young people's character (most notably the family, but also peers, the community, and the media). Notwithstanding these tensions, two particular implications for teaching and learning are prescient and deserve greater attention in relation to education for cosmopolitan citizenship.

First and foremost, and as the leading virtue ethicist Alasdair MacIntyre (1984: 216) highlights, the primary question becomes 'who am I?' (and we might add who might I become) rather than 'what should I do?'. In making this comment MacIntyre has in mind, of course, small and localised communities. Nevertheless if we accept, as I have sought to suggest here, that political communities are possible beyond nation-states, the shift in educational focus from a cosmopolitan rule which one should follow to the virtue-based development of moral character becomes paramount. As Arthur (2003: 34) explains, '[B]eing virtuous is not a matter of following a set of prescribed rules, but rather of expressing one's moral character in attitudes, feelings and deeds. Virtuous people are disposed not simply to do the right thing, but to become the right sort of person'. From this perspective preparing pupils for their cosmopolitan lives, then, becomes a task of developing the requisite character dispositions – or virtues – necessary for engagement in diverse local and national communities *and* for participating in political communities at a global level.

Second, it is essential in any educational curricula or process pertaining to globalised citizenship that recognition is given to the contested, complex and dynamic nature of global political communities. In other words, pupils must be prepared for multifaceted and changing

forms of participatory processes and communities. Barber (2005: 103) alludes to the developing nature of globalised political communities when he suggests that '[F]ashioning a global civil society that rests on global civic education and global citizenship will not ensure global governance, but it is an indispensable condition for global governance. Citizens, whether local or global, are made not born: educated and socialized into their roles rather than inhabitants of those roles'. To educate pupils for dynamic global communities will need to build upon the sorts of knowledge, skills and dispositions central to participatory and dialogical engagement at a local and national level – a movement 'towards an understanding of global politics and cosmopolitan civic education in terms of citizen action, membership and sovereignty' (Peterson, 2011: 432). For teachers, this may be a difficult task, particularly given research evidence that suggests that 'students' desire to know more about global issues is often thwarted by teachers' lack of knowledge or confidence in these topics' (Pike, 2008: 475). Nevertheless, recognition of this is essential if meaningful educational interventions are to develop in this area.

## **Conclusion**

Taken in their most simplistic form, cosmopolitan ideas serve to remind educators of the need to educate pupils about, and to engage with: the plural interests which exist in the world, the interconnected nature of contemporary political societies, supra-national forms of governance, and experiences of oppression and human rights violation in a variety of localities. In itself, this claim is relatively unproblematic. Very few would seek to mount a cogent and compelling argument that pupils in schools should not be taught about the process of globalisation, the greater interconnectedness of nation-states and peoples, and the importance of human rights. Most are likely to accept, as I would, that it is appropriate to teach pupils the sorts of knowledge, skills and attributes which would enable them to become actively involved in globalised politics and political causes if they so choose. It is a further step, however, to believe that schools should teach pupils that they are *under a moral obligation* to do so. I have argued here that to take this further step is educationally problematic for a number of reasons and that, instead, the moral requirement of cosmopolitan education is better conceptualised from a virtue-based perspective rather than a rule-based ethic. Such an approach prioritises educational curricula and processes which prepare pupils

for cosmopolitan political communities by focusing on the character traits and virtues required to engage effectively within them.

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